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## Exegetical Notes.

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**John 8 : 12.**—Two ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles are referred to in our Lord's discourses at that feast. Day after day they brought water in solemn procession from Siloam, and poured it out in the temple; recalling the water pouring out abundantly from the smitten rock in the wilderness. Night after night the temple courts were brightly illuminated, in memory of the time when "in the daytime God led them with a cloud, and all the night through with a light of fire." To the former of these ceremonies the Lord referred in 7 : 37, adding in 7 : 38 an apparent allusion to what Ps. 105 : 41 says of the smitten rock. To the latter he alludes in this verse, and by the use of the word "followeth" shows that he has the guiding pillar of fire in mind. (That the writer of this gospel is apparently unconscious of any allusion to these two ceremonies is a strong evidence that he is reporting, not inventing, the words.) The word "followeth" further shows that the "light" which the speaker claims to be and to furnish is light for practical guidance, not for theoretical speculation—moral, not intellectual (*cf.* Ps. 119 : 105). The "darkness" is the darkness of the conscience, the darkness of moral evil; and this is dispelled, the word "followeth" implies, quite as much by his example as by his teaching. And he claims to furnish this example, the example of a sinless life, to "the world." And not only is he *an* example for the world, he is the only one: "I am *the* light of the world." A mere man could make no such claim. *Si non Deus, non bonus.*

**John 9 : 1-11.**—*The healing of the man born blind.*—As the other miracles in this gospel illustrate and confirm particular points of our Lord's teaching, so this connects itself with 8 : 12: "I am the light of the world" (*cf.* vs. 5 here). It probably took place at this same Feast of Tabernacles; though, if we read *τοτε* in 10 : 22 (see R. V. marg.), it would belong at dedication. In the whole narrative distinguish the following incidents: vss. 1-7, the cure; vss. 8-12, interview with neighbors; vss. 13-17, interview with Pharisees; vss. 18-23, interview of parents with "Jews;" vss. 24-34, the man's interview with "Jews;" vss. 35-38, his interview with Jesus himself. Each of the man's four

interviews marks a definite step forward in his faith (observe, *e. g.*, the boldness of his repartees in his interview with the "Jews"); and as the details of the narrative seem to have no bearing upon the doctrinal teaching of the gospel, they are probably recorded to illustrate the development of faith.—Vs. 2. Christ had connected suffering with sin in 5:14. The disciples' ideas were possibly far from clear; they may have had in mind transmigration of souls, or sin in some pre-existent state, or before birth.—Vs. 3. We are not to inquire whose fault this is; this (like all similar cases) furnishes an opportunity to "show God's works" by relieving suffering. We are not concerned with the *cause*, but with the *purpose*, of physical evil.—Vs. 4. "We" (R. V.), not the speaker alone, must work God's works; and that before the night of death. He had, no doubt, his own near departure in view.—Vs. 5. Our Lord did not always demand antecedent faith (compare Luke 7:13, 14; 8:28, 29); but there was a germ of faith here, as shown by its growth.—Vs. 6. As the miracle itself, and the name Siloam, were symbolical, so probably was the means used (as in Mark 7:33; 8:23); some take the clogging of the eyes with mud as referring to our Lord's method of speaking in parables.—Vs. 7. "Siloam," a reservoir just outside Jerusalem to the south. From Siloam the water was brought for that ceremony of the feast which Christ has in mind in 7:37. And St. John sees in the name a typical reference to Jesus himself, as the one "sent" from God. St. John is fond of seeing symbols; see 10:22; 12:3 (last clause, *cf.* Mark 14:9); 13:30.—The vividness of the narrative in the verses that follow points to the man himself as the source of the evangelist's information.

**John 10:1-16.**—The unfortunate chapter division obscures the connection of this passage with what immediately precedes. Our Lord has begun to act as the "Good Shepherd" by receiving into his flock the beggar just cast out from the Jewish fold (9:35); and the last words of the chapter suggest the contrast between those who think they see their own way and Christ's sheep who simply trust and follow. Then follows this threefold allegory. It is impossible to make the same application of the symbols fit every part. It is better to regard each part as a separate allegory, to be interpreted without regard to the others.—Vss. 1-6. First allegory of the sheep-fold. (*General.*)—The "fold" is the visible church, Jewish or Christian; God's people the "sheep of his hand" (Ps. 95:7). One application of the figure, perhaps the primary one, would be this: the pharisaic

party was acting, not as divinely commissioned leader, but as self-appointed. Christ came commissioned by the Father (entering in "by the door"); the Baptist acted as porter; Christ calls his own ("everyone that is of the truth," 18:37), and leads them out from the old fold of the Jewish church, as was the case with the blind man. It has shortly before this become evident that he must break with the old church and found a new one (Matt. 16:18).—Vss. 7–10. Second allegory. (*Christ the Door.*)—"Again," vs. 7, suggests that this is a new application of the figure. Here Christ does not come through the door, but he is the door; and the fold is the new one, the Christian church. The blind man has entered through Christ the door (9:37, 38). "All that ever came before" him in this capacity—as "doors," *i. e.*, mediators, claiming to be the sole means of approach to God—are those of whom he says they are "thieves and robbers." He must, then, himself claim to be more than prophet, priest, or king, for those who came before him in these offices were truly what they claimed. The exclusive claim to personal allegiance, and to be the way to God, was made implicitly by the pharisaic party, explicitly by false Messiahs.<sup>1</sup> "Shall go in and go out" (vs. 7) is a symbol of the security and liberty of those who dwell in the Christian fold.—Vss. 11–16. Third allegory. (*Christ the Shepherd.*)—The word translated "good" (*καλός*) means not only good inwardly, but also outwardly, attractive, fair, beautiful. "Layeth down his life" is a phrase used by St. John ten times, and not elsewhere. The figure is thought to be that of laying down money in payment—ransom money. If vs. 12 refers to our Lord's time, the "hirelings" must be the priestly party, which were Sadducees, and gave up true care for the sheep, and the "wolf" the pharisaic party. The application to those who since that time have had a part in Christ's pastoral office, some of whom have been and are "good," and some only "hirelings," is too obvious. "This fold," vs. 16, is the Jewish fold; those who "are not of this fold" are the scattered Gentiles, who are to be joined with his sheep led out of the old fold, and to become "one flock" under "one shepherd" (*cf.* Ezek. 34:12, 23). That the Christian church is here spoken of as a "flock" by no means proves that it is distinguished from the Jewish "fold" by lack of outward organization (*cf.* vs. 9; and see Westcott, *Revelation of the Father*, p. 70).

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<sup>1</sup> See LIGHTFOOT, *Biblical Essays*, pp. 146 ff.

**John 1:8.**—"He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light." In this utterance the writer seems to fear lest the forerunner be deemed the Messiah. The Baptist was almost so regarded (1) by the multitudes who flocked to his preaching, Matt. 3:1-12, etc.; (2) by the official deputation sent to investigate him, John 1:19-28.

Jesus himself highly honored John, Matt. 11:7-11; Luke 7:24-28; and yet John was (1) but a voice, John 1:23; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; (2) an introducer, Luke 1:17; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; John 3:30; (3) not in the kingdom, Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28; (4) fluctuating, Matt. 11:3; Luke 7:19; (5) partial in his ministry, Acts 18:25; 19:3.

*The herald must not be confounded with the king.*

Subjects suggested: (1) the tendency to treat means as ends; (2) the peril of elevating non-essentials to the position of essentials; (3) the distinctive mission of men.

**Luke 1:38.**—"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Handmaid means bondservant. Mary gives herself in utmost subjection to the revelation. The selection of her to be the mother of the Messiah is not arbitrary, but is due to (1) her descent from David, Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; and probably the genealogy given by Luke is Mary's; (2) her thorough imbue with scriptural teaching, and her consequent expectations; her song (Luke 1:46-55) contains twenty quotations from, or allusions to, Old Testament phraseology; (3) her thoughtful and retentive mind, Luke 2:19, 51; (4) her complete submission to the divine will as evinced in this text; in view, too, of the misapprehensions and suspicions sure to arise, *cf.* Matt. 1:19, and the tales told by Josephus (*Antiq.*, XVIII, iii, 4) and Celsus (see Origen, *Against Celsus*, I, 28).

Without mariolatry, Mary is worthy of greater honor than is usually given her by Protestants.

Subjects: (1) the Virgin's virtues; (2) the assumption *via* submission; (3) home preparations for public missions.

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**John 21:3.**—"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing." Peter never uttered braver or more Christian words than these. For months he had cherished a great hope and an exalted ambition. This hope is

now completely shattered, but he does not repine over his great disappointment. He resolutely returns to his humble but honest occupation. If he cannot be the foundation of the church, or carry the keys of the kingdom, he can, at least, fill a small but worthy place in God's economy of the world.

It is not success but failure which tests a man, and reveals to himself and to others the stuff of which he is made.

**Romans 16 : 6.**—"Salute Mary, who bestowed much labor on us." This is the one Hebrew name in a long catalogue. Mary was certainly a Jewess. Her services suggest that she was an elderly woman. Acts 12 : 12 states that Mary the mother of John Mark resided at Jerusalem in the year 44, and rendered similar services to Christian Jews. Tradition affirms that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome, and this gospel was written about 68 A. D. We may infer that the Mary of the text is the mother of Mark, and may find in the impartial service which she rendered in Jerusalem and at Rome the early consciousness of the universality of Christianity.

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**Amos 5 : 14.**—"Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so shall Jehovah, the God of hosts, be with you, as ye say that he is." This verse expresses the thought of God's presence with Israel in the past, together with two inferences that were drawn from it, that of the nation, and that of the prophet. (1) Amos and his hearers were agreed that Jehovah had been with Israel in the past; he had chosen them (3 : 2), he had led them wonderfully (2 : 9-10), he had given Jeroboam II. military success (2 Kings 14 : 25-28; Am. 6 : 1-2, 13, 14), he had bestowed great wealth (Am. 3 : 12-13; 6 : 4-6). (2) The nation construed these facts as a sign that it was the favorite people of the Lord, whom, regardless of its character, he would always defend: "Jehovah is with us." (Cf. 5 : 18; 6 : 1-3). (3) Amos construed them as reasons why Israel above all nations should be righteous: "Seek good that ye may live." For him there was no such thing as a favored nation in the sight of God (9 : 7). Righteousness is the only guarantee of God's continued favor (5 : 14-15, 24). Israel is sinful (2 : 6-8, 12; 3 : 10; 4 : 1, 11; 6 : 3; 8 : 4-6), therefore Israel will be judged like the other nations (1 : 2-3 : 2; 3 : 11-4 : 3). Past blessing only increases responsibility and guilt (3 : 2).

Sermon theme: Divine blessing of a nation or an individual in

the past is no guarantee of divine favor in the future. Righteousness is the only basis for confidence that God is with us.

**Isaiah 7:12.**—"But Ahaz said, I will not ask (a sign), neither will I tempt the Lord." (1) Isaiah offered Ahaz a sign in order to convince him of the truth of the message that he had just delivered (7:1-9), that there was no danger from the alliance of the Syrian and the Israelitish kings, and that, consequently, Judah's true policy was to wait patiently for God's deliverance. (2) Ahaz declined the sign on the ground that he was too pious to put God to the test by asking for further evidence in support of his word. The hypocrisy of this answer is shown by Isaiah's indignation (vs. 13) and by the judgment announced upon Ahaz (vss. 17-25). (3) Ahaz' true reason for declining the sign was that he was convinced that the only way out of his peril was to buy the aid of the king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7 f.; 2 Chron. 28:16 f.; Isa. 7:17, 18, 20; 8:7). He would not see Isaiah's sign for fear that it would compel him to give up his cherished idea.

Sermon theme suggested by the episode: The subtrefuges that men devise to escape listening to evidence that may force them to change their minds.

**Habakkuk 2:1.**—"I will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer to my remonstrance." This verse expresses the thought that God's answer to the prophet is the answer that the prophet makes to himself. In 1:1-4 Habakkuk utters his perplexity over the oppression of the righteous by the wicked. In vss. 5-11 he sees that the Chaldeans are coming to punish the wicked; but this only raises the further query (vss. 12-17) why the Chaldeans themselves, who destroy nations that are more righteous than they, are allowed to go unpunished. In 2:1 he searches within himself for God's solution of this problem. He finds it (vs. 4) in his own moral conviction, "Behold the wicked (?), his life is not sure within him, but the righteous lives by his faithfulness;" that is, God's moral rule of the world stands fast, therefore the wicked Chaldean must fall and the righteous must be delivered (2:5 f. The text of 5a is corrupt). In the voice of his own conscience Habakkuk finds the answer of the Lord to his remonstrance.

Sermon theme: We learn God's thought and will through the prayerful use of the spiritual faculties that he has given us.

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